

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month

April's topic is military sexual trauma (MST). MST refers to both sexual harassment and assault that occurs in a military setting. It includes unwelcomed verbal and physical conduct of sexual nature. One out of Four female veterans have experienced MST during their military service. The Pentagon estimated that 26.000 sexual assaults occurred in 2013.

In the past there has been a problem for female veterans applying for disability benefits related to PTSD from their MST experiences. In 2013 the Ruth Moore Act was passed to help improve veterans application to receive disability benefits. Each VA Medical Center has a MST coordinator to assist veterans. At the Lexington VA Medical Center the MST Coordinator is Dr Patricia Peacock, 859-233-4511 and at the Robley Rex VA Medical Center in Louisville the coordinator is Jessica Iliff 502-287-4021.

Other resources for the female veteran include Service Women's Action Network (SWAN) at www.servicewomen.org 212-683-0015 ext 324 and in KY Athenasisters at Athenasisters.org a support group founded by this year's Female Veteran of the Year, Lindsey Gargotta.